

# **AGATHA CHRISTIE'S THE MOUSETRAP: A FACT FILE**

- The Mousetrap began life as a radio play, which was written at the request of the BBC for Queen Mary.
- The Mousetrap is the longest running show of any kind in the world.
- The show has now been presented in 27 languages in more than 50 countries.
- Since it opened on 25th November 1952, over 460 actors and actresses have appeared in the play.

- Some cast members are in the Guinness Book of Records: David Raven as the 'Most Durable Actor' for 4575 performances as Major Metcalf and the late Nancy Seabrooke for a record breaking 15 years as an understudy.
- In An Autobiography Agatha Christie said that she initially thought The Mousetrap would only run for a maximum of eight months.
- Agatha Christie gave the rights to The Mousetrap to her grandson Mathew Prichard when he was nine years old.

- When The Mousetrap opened Mr Winston Churchill was Prime Minister, much essential food was rationed, and television programmes ended at 10:30pm.



- The Mousetrap first entered the record books on April 12th 1958 when it became the longest running show of any kind in the history of British theatre.
- In 1959 the cast of The Mousetrap, armed with various props, gave a special performance at Wormwood Scrubs prison. During the performance two prisoners escaped.

- Originally produced in Nottingham at the Theatre Royal, it toured England before embarking on a 32 year run at The New Ambassadors Theatre in London.
- In March 1974 the play moved from The Ambassadors Theatre to the St. Martin's Theatre without missing a single show!
- In 2000, the set was replaced for the first time during the run at St Martin's Theatre, still to the same design as the original. This task was completed over a weekend without the loss of a performance.
- Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II attended the 50th anniversary performance on November 25th 2002.



- On November 18, 2012 for one performance only, The Mousetrap celebrated its 25,000th performance (60th anniversary) with a celebrity-filled cast including Hugh Bonneville, Nicholas Farrell, Iain Glen, Tamsin Greig, Miranda Hart, Harry Lloyd, Sir Patrick Stewart and Dame Julie Walters. The Agatha Christie memorial statue was unveiled for this occasion.



- The 28,000 performance in the West End took place on 12th of October 2019.
- On an occasion such as cast changes or milestone anniversary performances, a cake is ceremoniously cut with a sword. The cake is in the shape of a ticker counter that keeps track of the amount of performances.



- Every performance of The Mousetrap sets a new world record for the number of performances and after each performance the audience is asked 'to preserve the tradition of The Mousetrap by keeping the secret locked in their hearts.'

**The long-held motto of The Mousetrap is “Keep the Secret.” Please continue this tradition by refusing to tell whodunit to those who have not seen the play for themselves!**

- The contract terms of the play state that no film version can be made until the West End show has been closed for at least six months, and since it is still running—no official film has been made!

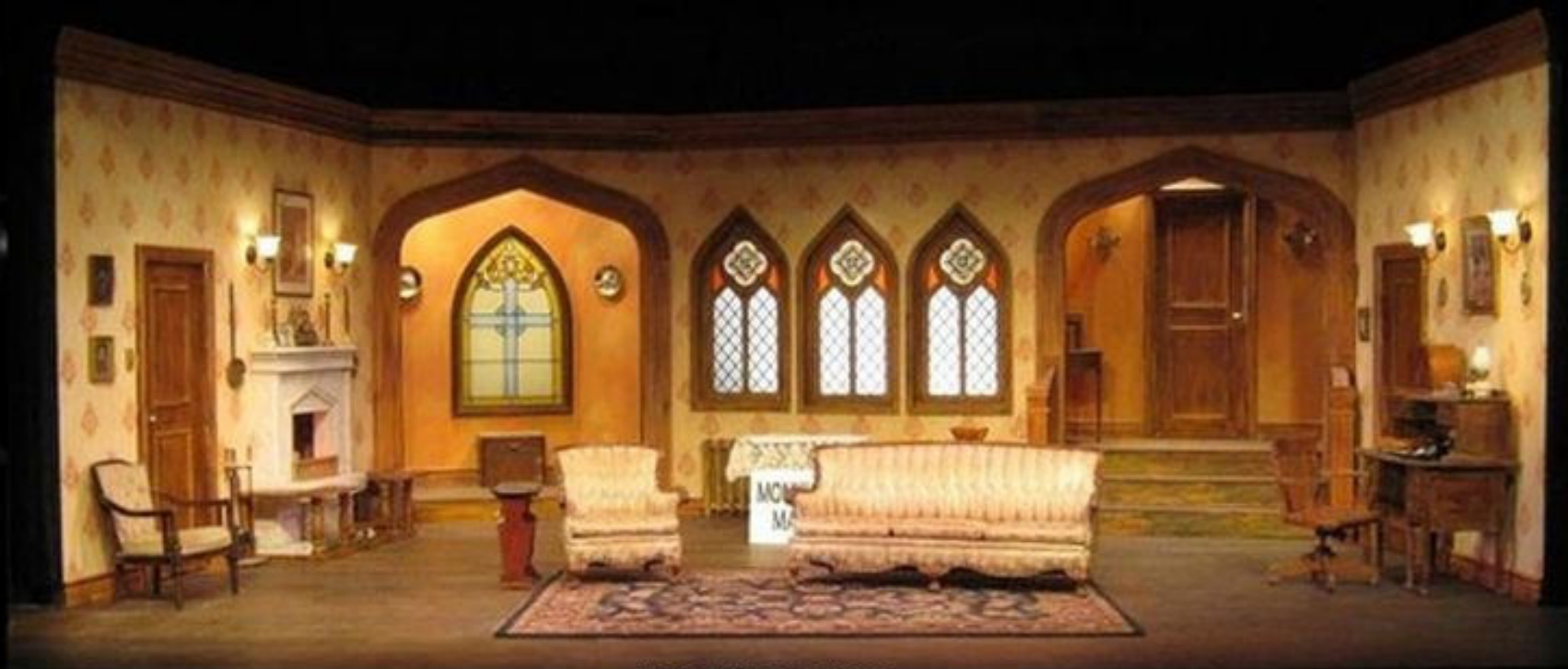


# Characters

- **Mollie Ralston** – Proprietor of Monkswell Manor, and wife of Giles.
- **Giles Ralston** – Husband of Mollie who runs Monkswell Manor with his wife.
- **Christopher Wren** – The first guest to arrive at the hotel, Wren is a hyperactive young man who acts in a very peculiar manner. He admits he is running away from something, but refuses to say what. Wren claims to have been named after the architect of the same name by his parents.
- **Mrs Boyle** – A critical older woman who is pleased by nothing she observes.
- **Major Metcalf** – Retired from the army, little is known about Major Metcalf.
- **Miss Casewell** – A strange, aloof, masculine woman who speaks offhandedly about the horrific experiences of her childhood.
- **Mr Paravicini** – A man of unknown provenance, who turns up claiming his car has overturned in a snowdrift. He appears to be affecting a foreign accent and artificially aged with make-up.
- **Detective Sergeant Trotter** – The detective role during the play. He arrives in a snow storm and questions the proprietors and guests.
- **Voice on the radio** – source of news relevant to the story

# Sets/scenery





**The Mousetrap**  
**Set designed and built by Dwayne Campbell**  
**for the 2012 Metro Theatre Production**











# Whodunnit?

A whodunit follows the paradigm of the classical detective story in the sense that it presents crime as a puzzle to be solved through a chain of questions that the detective poses. In a whodunit, however, the audience is given the opportunity to engage in the same process of deduction as the protagonist throughout the investigation of a crime. This engages the readers so that they strive to compete with or outguess the expert investigator.

A defining feature of the whodunit narrative is the so-called **double narrative**. Here, one narrative is hidden and gradually revealed while the other is the open narrative, which often transpires in the present time of the story. The former involves the narrative presented to the reader by the author or the actual story as it happened in chronological order while the latter focuses on the underlying substance or material of the narrative.

The double narrative has a deep structure but is specific, particularly when it comes to time and a split gaze on the narrative itself. The two tales coexist and interweave with the first tale focusing on the crime itself, what led to it, and the investigation to solve it while the second story is all about the reconstruction of the crime. Here, the *diegesis* or the way the characters live on the inquiry level creates the phantom narration where the objects, bodies, and words become signs for both the detective and the reader to interpret and draw their conclusions from. For instance, in a detective novel, solving a mystery entails the reconstruction of the criminal events. This process, however, also involves on the part of the detective the production of a hypothesis that could withstand scrutiny, including the crafting of findings about cause and motive as well as crime and its intended consequences. This discourse of explanation constitutes the second narrative besides the primary story relating to the crime.

The double narrative is cited as a main distinguishing element between the whodunit and the thriller. The whodunit goes backward as it goes forward, reconstructing the timeline of both crime and investigation, the thriller coincides with the action in a single story. According to Tzvetan Todorov, in terms of temporal logic, the whodunit narrative is considered a paradigm for fiction in general because the story unfolds in relation not to a future event but one that is already known and merely lying in wait. Such certainty pertains to the crime and not to the identity of the culprit, who the reader must anticipate as part of the unknown future.

This narrative development has been seen as a form of comedy, in which order is restored to a threatened social calm.